

Having participated throughout this examination and presented my oral submission, I remain deeply concerned that the cumulative impacts on Little Bromley have not been properly considered and that the examination has consistently favoured the needs of the applicant over those of the affected community.

Public Confidence in the Examination Process

Throughout this examination, National Grid has repeatedly stated that it has considered alternatives and that the proposed development represents the preferred option. However, many residents, including myself, have found it difficult to identify where genuinely comparable alternatives have been subjected to the same level of scrutiny.

Due to the scale of the proposals, it has not been realistically possible for the Examining Authority to properly scrutinise an application of this unprecedented scale within the statutory examination period. The Development Consent Order comprises thousands of pages of technical documentation covering engineering, environmental assessment, compulsory acquisition, ecology, transport, landscape, heritage, noise and numerous other specialist disciplines. It is simply not credible to suggest that every substantive issue has received the detailed consideration that it deserves within the time available. Fundamental matters such as the routing of overhead lines, the design and operational justification for major infrastructure, including substations and permanent access roads, and the cumulative effects of multiple nationally significant infrastructure projects affecting Little Bromley have, from the perspective of residents, largely been accepted on the basis of National Grid's assertions rather than being rigorously tested through the examination process.

Furthermore, the approval of the North Falls and Five Estuaries projects before the determination of this application inevitably raises questions regarding whether the cumulative impact on Little Bromley can now be assessed with complete objectivity. Those approvals have effectively established the principle of concentrating nationally significant energy infrastructure around Little Bromley before the full cumulative consequences of all associated developments have been considered.

Whether or not this was the intention, the sequence of decisions gives the appearance that the strategic direction has already been established. This inevitably undermines public confidence that this application has been considered with complete impartiality and on its own individual

Permanent Access Road

National Grid has stated that the permanent access road is required to facilitate future abnormal indivisible loads, such as the transport of replacement transformers. However, I do not believe that this justification has been adequately demonstrated.

The movement of abnormal loads would represent an exceptional event rather than a routine operational requirement. Such movements may occur only once, or perhaps not at all, during the operational life of the substation. It is therefore difficult to justify the permanent alteration of the landscape, together with its associated environmental and visual impacts, to accommodate an event that is both infrequent and uncertain.

National Grid has considerable experience in transporting abnormal loads across the United Kingdom and routinely employs temporary engineering solutions, including temporary haul roads, ground protection systems, traffic management and temporary access arrangements. No compelling evidence has been presented to explain why similar measures could not be implemented if and when such an exceptional movement became necessary.

Furthermore, National Grid has not provided a transparent options appraisal comparing a permanent access road with less environmentally harmful alternatives. Without such an assessment, it has not demonstrated that the permanent road represents the least intrusive or most proportionate solution.

The Planning Inspectorate should therefore carefully consider whether the permanent environmental harm arising from the access road is justified by what is, at best, an occasional operational requirement. In my view, a temporary or controlled access arrangement would represent a more proportionate solution that would significantly reduce the long-term impact on the character of Little Bromley whilst still allowing National Grid to fulfil its operational obligations.

Operational Noise

The concerns that I raised during the examination regarding operational operational noise remain unresolved.

The Environmental Statement relies upon baseline measurements that do not adequately represent worst-case operating conditions. Electrical substations generate higher levels of transformer cooling noise during periods of high electrical demand and during colder weather conditions when cooling equipment operates differently.

The assessment also fails to properly consider the cumulative operational noise generated by the existing Little Bromley substation together with the proposed East Anglia Connector Node and other consented or proposed infrastructure nearby. Residents are therefore being asked to accept conclusions based upon modelling that does not reflect the likely long-term operational environment experienced over the lifetime of the development.

For a development expected to operate for many decades, this approach is neither precautionary nor sufficiently robust.

Cumulative Impact on Little Bromley

Perhaps my greatest concern remains the cumulative impact.

Little Bromley is being asked to accommodate an unprecedented concentration of nationally significant energy infrastructure, including:

- the existing National Grid substation;
- North Falls;
- Five Estuaries;
- the approved battery energy storage development;
- the proposed Tarchon project; and
- the proposed East Anglia Connector Node.

Each application has largely been considered individually, yet residents will experience the combined impacts of all these developments simultaneously.

Those combined impacts include:

- increasing industrialisation of the surrounding countryside;
- permanent loss of rural character;
- cumulative operational noise;
- cumulative visual intrusion;

- increased traffic impacts;
- degradation of public rights of way; and
- the continuing uncertainty regarding future expansion of National Grid infrastructure.

Planning policy requires cumulative effects to be properly assessed. I do not believe that this examination has fully reflected the reality that residents of Little Bromley will experience.

Closing Remarks

Residents recognise the importance of strengthening the UK's electricity network and supporting the transition to renewable energy. My objection is not to the principle of improving national infrastructure.

Rather, it is that the burden of this infrastructure is being placed disproportionately upon one small rural community without sufficient justification that less harmful alternatives have been properly explored.

I respectfully ask the Examining Authority to give particular consideration to:

- whether the permanent access road is genuinely necessary once construction has concluded;
- whether operational noise has been assessed using realistic worst-case assumptions;
- whether the cumulative impacts of all existing, approved and proposed developments have been fully considered; and
- whether the examination process has given sufficient and demonstrably equal weight to the concerns of local

communities alongside the evidence presented by National Grid.

For these reasons, I request that the Examining Authority recommends refusal of the proposal in its current form or, at the very least, requires substantial changes to reduce its long-term impacts upon Little Bromley and its residents.